

Battle of the Bugs

Leaf-eating moths released to combat invasive plants

“This being Valentine’s Day, I love to hate *Lygodium*,” said Mark Nelson, Jonathan Dickinson State Park manager. The park, located in Martin County, was the site of a Feb. 14 moth release to help combat *Lygodium* (*Lygodium microphyllum*), an invasive climbing fern spreading through Florida’s natural areas and threatening native wildlife.

“For the first time, Florida is using insects as a front line in the ongoing battle to control non-native, ecologically damaging invasive plants,” said South Florida Water Management District Executive Director Henry Dean. “Biological controls are the key to managing this weed. For us, effective vegetation management is a vital component of our unprecedented efforts to clean up and restore the greater Everglades ecosystem.”

The interagency project was developed through an eight-year, \$675,000 partnership between the South Florida Water Management District and the U.S. Department of Agriculture-Agricultural Research Service Invasive Plant Research Laboratory.

Caterpillars of this moth (*Austromusotima camponozale*) eat *Lygodium* leaves – killing the small invasive plants and reducing the competitiveness of larger plants. The moth is the first of a suite of biological control agents that will be used to subdue the spread of the vigorous weed in Florida.

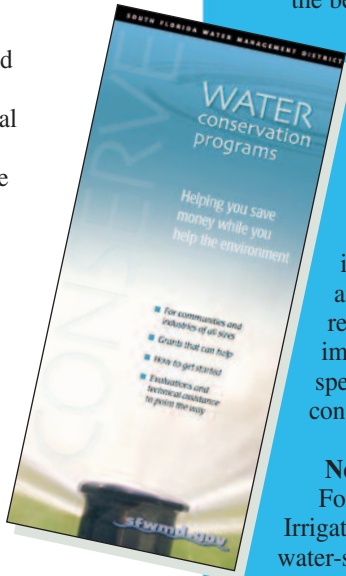
Florida’s biologists and land managers have waged other battles against harmful environmental invaders. In the 1980s, melaleuca reached critical levels, dominating almost a half million acres in South Florida. Through effective



The caterpillars of this moth eat *Lygodium* leaves, killing small plants and reducing the competitiveness of larger plants. It’s the first of many biological control agents that will be released against *Lygodium* in Florida.

interagency coordination and management using both herbicides and two biological control agents, melaleuca populations in the region are now mostly under control.

While melaleuca is decreasing regionally, *Lygodium* is spreading and threatening to overtake native plant communities. The fern’s sun-blocking canopy kills native plants, with vines invading remote wilderness areas difficult to access with traditional herbicide controls.



Question selected from District letters and emails received from the public.

Many of my neighbors run their sprinklers everyday! Is there some way our whole community could learn about the best method to water lawns?

Great question especially now that we are in the dry season. The District offers a free service called “Mobile Irrigation Labs” that will come to your home and/or neighborhood to evaluate irrigation systems and practices, and then provide recommendations for improvements. These water specialists also conduct water conservation workshops.

New brochure now available!
For more information on Mobile Irrigation Labs and other important water-saving initiatives, contact our Public Information Department for a free copy of our new Water Conservation Programs brochure. You’ll find valuable information and funding opportunities that can help you and your business – as well as utilities and homeowner associations – save water and save money! Email your request to ilopez@sfwmd.gov or call us toll-free in Florida at 1-800-432-2045, ext. 2064.



ANSWER TO FIND FREDDY

Think pink!

Freddy is at the 14th Annual Susan G. Komen “Race for the Cure” held January 22 in downtown West Palm Beach. The goal of this organization is to eradicate breast cancer through research, education, screening and treatment.

For the 2005 event, the District’s 137-member team included six breast cancer survivors. Through bake sales, auctions of donated items and the selling of commemorative pink bracelets, employees raised \$8,255 for the Race for the Cure.

South Florida Water Management District staff actively support and contribute to numerous charitable causes throughout the year including Food for Families, Hospice, Water for People, Leukemia & Lymphoma Society, hurricane relief, Adopt-A-Family, foster children, United Way, literacy and support for our overseas military troops.

CREDITS

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The South Florida Water Management District is a regional, governmental agency that oversees the water resources in the southern half of the state. It is the oldest and largest of the state’s five water management districts.

Our mission is to manage and protect water resources of the region by balancing and improving water quality, flood control, natural systems and water supply.

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Water Management – Whose Job is it Anyway?

Workshops highlight successful water supply strategies

Consider this: It’s rained three days straight in northern Broward County, but Miami-Dade has barely seen a drop in months. Recognizing that South Florida’s water resources are interconnected, local, regional, and state governments must combine forces to plan for future water supply needs.

To bring municipal leaders together to discuss water policy issues, area-specific Municipal Water Academy workshops were held Jan. 19-21 in Palm Beach, Broward, and Miami-Dade counties. “These sessions were designed to build relationships and encourage dialogue between local government and the South Florida Water Management District about water resources and water management,” said Alvin B. Jackson Jr., South Florida Water Management District Deputy Executive Director of Government and Public Affairs.

Local governments responsible for any portion of their own water supply are now required by state law to establish 10-year Water Supply Facilities Work Plans to project water supply needs, identify and prioritize water supply facilities and sources, and plan for capital improvements. These local plans must be coordinated with water management district regional water supply plans.

The workshops were co-presented by the South Florida Water Management District, the Florida League of Cities and the Institute of Government at Palm Beach Community College. While some attendees may have needed clarification of interagency roles, all agreed that close and continuous cooperation was needed. “If you walk away from this meeting with just one thing in mind, it would be that local government and the water management district need to work together in planning efforts early and often,” said District Assistant Executive Director Carol Wehle.

Presentations emphasized that finding and funding alternative water supply resources will not come cheap. To develop local projects, governments can seek funding sources such as Environmental Protection Agency grants and state legislative funding. Applying for Alternative Water Supply grants from the South Florida Water Management District is another option. The grant program helps fund capital projects that use innovative methods to counterbalance increasing demands on freshwater supplies.

Attendees Mindy Moore and Marcia Stevens, planners for the City of Deerfield Beach, found the workshop to be beneficial. “The symbiotic relationship between urban potable water demands of South Florida cities, the environmental requirements of the Everglades, and the protection of the aquifer system was very well explained,” Stevens said.

The workshops will be expanded to Orange/Osceola and Martin/St.Lucie/Okeechobee counties, and the District’s west coast region. Plans are also in development for a follow-up, more in-depth series for all locations.

